

It's tree day

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Today is for the trees.

It's Arbor Day, and locally, people will plant trees and talk about why it's good to have them around.

Officials will celebrate the day from 10 a.m. to noon at 8 Hazel Place in Lawrence, where Groundwork Lawrence will plant its 60th tree in two weeks as part of its GreenStreets program.

There's good reason for the love affair with trees, according to Rose Gonzalez, program manager for Groundwork Lawrence.

"It's going to do a lot to help Lawrence's air quality, reduce pollution from automotive exhaust," Gonzalez said. "It then improves water quality by decreasing the rainwater runoff and erosion."

Trees block wind on cold days and create shade on hot days. They also add aesthetic value to the landscape, provide homes for animals and improve people's moods, Gonzalez said.

The tree planting will be well-attended. Congresswoman Niki Tsongas has been invited, along with Mayor Michael Sullivan, state Department of Conservation and Recreation Commissioner Rick Sullivan, and officials from YouthBuild Lawrence, Habitat for Humanity, Lawrence CommunityWorks, Bread and Roses Housing and the City of Lawrence First Time Homebuyer Program.

The event will culminate the GreenStreets tree planting program, and kick off Groundwork Lawrence's Urban Forestry Coalition initiative to inspire people to plan and advocate for more planting, maintenance and protection, according to a press release.

Groundwork Lawrence has been planting trees in yards belonging to new homeowners, and each tree is matched with a resident who agrees to care for it.

The celebration doesn't end today. Tomorrow in Andover, people can learn just about everything they want to know about trees at Memorial Hall Library, thanks to the League of Women Voters of Andover/North Andover.

Starting at 9:15 a.m., the group is hosting talks about "Why Trees Are Cool (for us and the climate)," how to select the right tree, keeping trees healthy and making smart choices in ecological and healthy living. People can learn how Fenway Park is maintained using organic lawn care techniques.

The League of Women Voters will have a tree and grass seed sale in front of Old Town Hall from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. People can purchase a variety of trees at near- wholesale prices from Delahunty Nurseries of Windham, N.H. People can also buy Pearl's Premium grass seed from the League of Women Voters.

Also tomorrow morning, Valley Tree Service of Groveland will be at 382 Market St. in Lawrence, donating labor to remove a large tree that was badly damaged by fire in January 2008. Valley Tree Service will remove the damaged tree, grind the stump and plant a new tree in its place.

The first Arbor Day was celebrated in Nebraska on April 10, 1872, thanks to a resolution proposed by Nebraska City resident J. Sterling Morton. Morton, a civic leader, agriculturist and former newspaper editor, urged Nebraskans to "set aside one day to plant trees, both forest and fruit," according to the Arbor Day Foundation.

Arbor Day is now observed in all 50 states and in many countries around the world.

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